

Congressman Blumenauer submitted the following statement to the Congressional Record regarding the vote to extend provisions of the Patriot Act:

Today I voted against HR 514, another one-year extension of three overreaching provisions in the Patriot Act, which are set to expire on February 28, 2011.

I have opposed the Patriot Act since the original, bipartisan version of the bill was hijacked by the Bush administration and significantly expanded without safeguards for the rights of ordinary Americans. This is why it has been consistently opposed by thoughtful members of Congress from both parties.

In a country that prides itself on civil rights and freedom of speech, we must maintain a system with checks and balances to ensure that our government works for our citizens in a transparent way. I have no doubt that we can keep America safe without compromising our liberties. By simply extending this policy for another year, we are forfeiting the opportunity and neglecting the responsibility to have a meaningful review that can bring us closer to a more accountable approach that balances individual privacy with our national defense.

One of the many provisions in need of reform and left unaddressed in this bill is section 215. This provision fails to provide meaningful protection for library patrons, and library and business records. The burden should be on the government to show reasonable suspicion or probable cause before undertaking an investigation.

After a decade it is past time to review and refine this legislation. The intelligence community already has the tools necessary to keep us safe without compromising our privacy. Another one-year extension is a lost opportunity to make sure we protect the liberties of American citizens.